

billion next year to provide scholarships to recruit outstanding new teachers and to enable current teachers to improve their skills through mentoring programs and other professional development.

Fourth, our proposal will expand the nation's after-school programs. Every day, over 5 million children are left home alone after school. Hundreds of thousands of families are on waiting lists. By investing in after-school programs, we keep children away from drugs, off the streets, and out of trouble, and provide a wholesome learning environment in the afternoons.

Improving education is clearly one of our highest national priorities. But in order for all children to achieve their full potential, we must make significant investments in children long before they ever walk through schoolhouse doors.

Ten years ago, the nation's governors said their number one educational goal was that by the year 2000, all children should enter school "ready to learn." Unfortunately, we will not reach this goal by 2000. One of my priorities in the new Congress is to renew this battle. We are already fighting hard for smaller classes, better teachers, and more modern school facilities, but we can't neglect to invest in education at the very earliest ages.

The next priority is save Social Security. Few issues facing Congress today will have greater long term impact on the lives of more Americans than strengthening Social Security for future generations. For two-thirds of America's senior citizens, Social Security retirement benefits provide more than half their annual income. Without Social Security, half the nation's elderly would be living in poverty.

But it is much more than a retirement program. Thirty percent of its benefits support disabled persons of all ages and their families, and the surviving dependents of breadwinners who have died prematurely. In 1996, Social Security benefits kept over one million children out of poverty as well.

Radical change is unnecessary and unwise. We face a Social Security problem, not a Social Security crisis. The program can be made healthy without dismantling it in the process. It now has enough resources to fully fund current benefits for more than 30 years. If we plan for the future by addressing this problem now, the long-run revenue shortfall can be eliminated with relatively minor adjustments to the system.

Some have suggested that the only way to save Social Security is to privatize a major part of it. Nothing could be further from the truth. In reality, diverting a portion of the payroll taxes from Social Security into private retirement accounts would only make the future Social Security shortfall far greater and would necessitate sharp cuts to the very benefits that senior citizens rely on.

Private accounts, subject to the ups and downs of the stock market, are fine as a supplement to Social Security. But, they are no substitute for Social Security. The guaranteed benefits which Social Security currently provides are the best foundation on which to build for a secure retirement.

More than half of the long-run shortfall can be closed by merely broadening the types of investments made by the trust fund, just as state and municipal public pension funds have done routinely for years. The remainder of the shortfall can be eliminated by several other minor adjustments to the program—without reducing benefit levels.

The overwhelming majority of today's workers would be unaffected by these

changes. Current and future beneficiaries would be fully protected, and the guarantee of a secure retirement for America's workers would be preserved through the 21st century.

Another Democratic priority for this year is a much-needed increase in the minimum wage. Today, far too many workers work full time, and yet cannot make ends meet. Minimum wage workers who work 40 hours a week, 52 weeks a year earn just \$10,700–\$2,900 below the poverty level for a family of three.

Under the leadership of President Clinton, America has enjoyed 6 years of extraordinary economic growth. Unemployment is at its lowest level in a generation. Inflation is the lowest in 40 years. But for too many fellow citizens, it is someone else's boom. Twelve million working Americans are still earning poverty-level wages.

That is why we say now is the time to raise the minimum wage. The bill we introduce today will increase the level by a dollar—50 cents this year and 50 cents next year—and bring the minimum wage to \$6.15 an hour by September 2000.

We know who minimum wage workers are. They clean our office buildings. They are teachers aides in classrooms. They care for the chronically ill and the elderly. They are child care workers. They are aides in nursing homes. They sell groceries at the supermarket, and serve coffee at local shops.

In good conscience, as we celebrate the nation's continuing prosperity, we should not consign the millions of Americans who have these jobs to continuing poverty. We must raise the minimum wage, and we must raise it now.

Finally, I look forward to early action by the Senate on the landmark, bipartisan disability legislation that Senator JEFFORDS, Senator ROTH, Senator MOYNIHAN, and I announced last week. Over 75 percent of Americans with disabilities are unemployed. Most want to work—to enjoy the same fruits of their labor and fulfillment of their talents as everyone else in our society.

Our proposal makes this possible. It allows disabled Americans to take jobs without losing the Medicare and other benefits that are their lifeline. It also provides valuable job training and rehabilitation assistance that will give persons with disabilities the skills they need to have and hold a job.

These are important initiatives for the American future—for children, for working families, for the elderly, and for the disabled. These are the kinds of issues that the Senate should already be taking up. It is time to bring the impeachment trial to a fair and quick conclusion, so that we can deal more effectively with these challenges that are of much higher concern to working families.

Mr. BROWNBACK. I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 10 minutes in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

SOCIAL SECURITY, EDUCATION, AND TAXES

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, I appreciate the opportunity to address this body for the first time in this legislative session. We will have an exciting session full of business that the American people need conducted in this body.

I am particularly excited about the opportunity for us to deal with issues such as Social Security, creating a real

Social Security trust fund instead of robbing from that trust fund, as has taken place for so many years. That money needs to be saved, needs to be used, needs to be kept for the senior citizens or those soon to retire in this Nation. In this legislative session we have that opportunity to create that new Social Security trust fund. That is the top agenda item for the Republicans in the U.S. Senate: Social Security preservation and protection. We need to fight and get it done and do it in a bipartisan fashion.

Second is education, emphasizing local control of education. The notion of creating a national school board is not one that many of us are too enthusiastic about, feeling as if we have too much control out of Washington and not enough local control, not enough people on a localized basis saying here is what we need to do with education, and the notion that we are going to create a national school board is one that a number of us would be opposed to. But helping local units of government get access to Federal funds, more access to put more of that money in the classroom, is something many of us would be very supportive of and be excited about doing, and we are going to attack that tough issue of education to make the schools of this country better for the children of this country.

Third is taxes. Taxes are too high. It is time to reduce the marginal rates. It is time to eliminate the marriage penalty that is a penalty on married couples in this country. That is a ridiculous tax, if you think about it and the difficulties we are facing as a nation. Those three top items—Social Security, education, taxes—are lead items the Republican Senate is going to be putting forward, and I look forward to a hearty session full of those meaty items, dealt with, hopefully, in a bipartisan fashion. I welcome colleagues from the other side of the aisle to help us in solving those difficult issues.

TRIBUTE TO REV. DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, the issue I specifically want to address this morning, more than just our legislative agenda, is something that we celebrated yesterday, and that is the tribute to Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the celebration we had yesterday, on January 18, when we once again paused to remember Dr. King, a man who changed the course of history and America's conscience. Dr. King is one of the few individuals throughout history who has so nobly exemplified the principles of sacrificial love and devotion.

Yesterday, in Kansas, I attended two Dr. King celebrations, one in Topeka and one in Kansas City, and both full of people rededicating themselves to the life of Dr. King and what he had committed himself to and what he had